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For immediate release:

Ma-le'l Dunes Public Access Informational Meeting Set for Feb. 8

The public is invited to attend an informational meeting regarding the draft Public Access Plan and preliminary Initial Study Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) for the Ma-le'l Dunes Cooperative Management Area (CMA) near the north spit, Humboldt Bay.

The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 8, at 7 p.m. at the Manila Community Center on 1611 Peninsula Drive, off Highway 255 in Manila.

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA Draft Access Plan and IS/EA, which provide for a range of public uses at the site, were prepared by the State Coastal Conservancy in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Friends of the Dunes. This represents a joint effort among these agencies to address access needs at the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA.

The draft Access Plan, environmental review documents and plan alternatives will be presented at the meeting by Friends of the Dunes. Representatives of the USFWS, BLM and State Coastal Conservancy will be on hand to answer questions. Comment sheets for written comments will be available. Phone (707) 444-1307 with any questions about the meeting.

The documents will be available for public review beginning Friday, February 2, with a 30-day public comment period to follow. Digital versions will be available at the websites of the

USFWS, www.fws.gov/humboldtбай; BLM, www.blm.gov/ca/arcata; Friends of the Dunes, www.friendsofthedunes.org; and State Coastal Conservancy, www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov. Compact Disc and printed copies will be available at the USFWS Headquarters, 1020 Ranch Rd., Loleta; the BLM Arcata Field Office, 1695 Heindon Rd., Arcata and the Friends of the Dunes office, 1611 Peninsula Dr., Manila.

A printed copy will be available for review at the Humboldt County Library in Eureka. CD and printed copies of the documents will also be available at the public meeting.

Comments can be submitted via an online form at the Friends of the Dunes website at www.friendsofthedunes.org. Comments can also be emailed to accessplan@friendsofthedunes.org or submitted via post to P.O. Box 186, Arcata, CA 95521.

The Ma-le'l Dunes CMA is jointly managed by the BLM and the USFWS and consists of 444 acres of public land off of Young Lane in Manila. The area has a rich cultural history that is reflected in the Wiyot name "Ma-le'l."

Its unique combination of coastal dune, wetland and estuarine ecosystems present opportunities for developing an outstanding public access area. The BLM-managed southern portion of the Ma-le'l Dunes CMA (Ma-le'l South) is open to the public for uses, including hiking, wildlife viewing, photography, horseback riding and dog walking. The northern area of the CMA (Ma-le'l North) is managed by the USFWS and comprises the Ma-le'l Dunes Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The draft Public Access Plan proposes opening this unit to the public for a variety of activities including hiking, wildlife observation, photography and environmental education (no dog walking or horseback riding), following the approval of the Public Access Plan, environmental review documents and the implementation of access improvements.